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“In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government ought to be instructed. . . . No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people.”

Noah Webster, 1828

States Sign on to Common Core State Standards Initiative

Forty-eight states, excluding Alaska and Texas, have now signed and support the [Common Core State Standards Initiative](#). The initiative is being pushed by the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#) and the [National Governors Association](#) with hopes “to establish high expectations for all students.” While the Department of Education has indicated that the initiative is not a federal initiative but rather states collaborating together, the Department has made vocal its support for the initiative. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, [lauded](#) the effort as a “giant step” and has expressed support for states that sign on.

Even though these developments to establish common standards are being sponsored on the state level, some are concerned that there is a greater hidden agenda to eventually transform the common standards into a federal or national standard. Texas’s chief state school officer described the effort as “a national curriculum and testing system” that would result in “a step toward a federal takeover” of public schools throughout the nation. A recent [article](#) which outlined the concerns of the initiative and the path towards a national standard read, “This ill-advised rush to have national standards ready by early 2010 is driven by the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top (RttT) \$4 billion competitive-grant fund. Its final regulations, published in November, give a strong advantage to states that develop and adopt ‘common standards,’ and, in these hard economic times, states will not be easily able to justify declining to pursue this money.” In fact, federal rules to receive RttT funds express that states must participate in a “consortium of states” who have developed a set of common K-12 standards that are “internationally benchmarked,” tied to “college and career readiness” and include “a significant number of States.” What may be even more concerning is that the standards are currently being drafted; and while 48 states have signed on, the final draft has yet to be [released](#).

The Mount Vernon Statement Calls for Recommitment to Constitution

Leaders of conservative organizations nationwide gathered Wednesday to sign the Mount Vernon Statement, signaling their commitment to advancing and protecting the values and principles outlined in the U.S. Constitution. According to Edwin Feulner, president of the Heritage Foundation, the [Mount Vernon Statement](#) “reasserts conservative principles, values and beliefs that are embraced by more people in this country than those of any political ideology.”

The statement is modeled after the [Sharon Statement](#), written in 1960 in Sharon, Connecticut, by a group of conservative leaders who recognized the threat of the federal government to grow “exponentially.” According to Feulner, “Today, that threat is even greater, and so we must articulate anew the nature of Constitutional Conservatism in the 21st Century.”

Over 80 leaders from social, and fiscal, and national security conservative organizations, including the American Association of Christian Schools, were present at the signing. To date, the statement has received over 15,500 signatures from conservative groups as well as individuals throughout the nation.

The document begins by stating the conservative's commitment to the Constitution and the original intent of the Founding Fathers:

We recommit ourselves to the ideas of the American Founding. Through the Constitution, the Founders created an enduring framework of limited government based on the rule of law. They sought to secure national independence, provide for economic opportunity, establish true religious liberty and maintain a flourishing society of republican self-government.

The document is inviting to all stems of conservatism and hopes to bring about a more unified model that will strengthen the conservative movement. It states:

A Constitutional conservatism unites all conservatives through the natural fusion provided by American principles. It reminds economic conservatives that morality is essential to limited government, social conservatives that unlimited government is a threat to moral self-government, and national security conservatives that energetic but responsible government is the key to America's safety and leadership role in the world.

Edwin Meese, former U.S. Attorney General under President Reagan and Master of Ceremonies for the signing event stated, "This is an historic moment as, since the 2008 election, conservative leaders from across the country have been meeting and planning a comeback. A year ago some pundits claimed that conservatism was effectively dead. But today, as revelations about Washington's futility in addressing America's problems continue to mount, the movement is alive and poised for a resurgence of Constitutional Conservative leadership." Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Women for America also expressed, "Conservative principles are timeless and effective. Americans are realizing this truth as they watch – in horror – as government officials violate the principles and practices that have [made] America strong and good. This is the right time – with more and more citizens becoming involved – to clearly and plainly lay out the foundational beliefs that bind us together, the values that will put American back on track."

To read the Mount Vernon Statement and to add your signature, please click [here](#).

Progressives Pursue Education Agenda

An [article](#) written this week in the *Washington Post* titled, "Progressives and the Growing Dependency Agenda," expounds on the topic of government expansion and the progressives' agenda to create a greater dependency on the federal government. George F. Will, author of the article, discusses how liberal policies lure low-income families into a strong dependence on the federal government through means such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, the promise of a "public option" in the health care bill, and billions of stimulus and tarp monies that actually swallow up the auto industry and banks. Will finds that the current path is to crowd out the private sector, which will in turn establish a greater dependence on the government.

Perhaps the greatest example of this can be seen in the opposition to school choice. The article targets the Democratic majority party in Congress for terminating the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), a program that allowed thousands of low-income children to access quality education through competitive scholarships. Will charges, "Only two things are infinite -- the expanding universe and Democrats' hostility to the District of Columbia's school choice program. [Killing this small program](#), which [benefits 1,300 mostly poor and minority children](#), is odious and indicative. It is a small piece of something large -- the Democrats' dependency agenda, which aims to multiply the ways Americans are dependent on government."

Since the program was zeroed out, several Representatives are working hard to [reauthorize the program](#). Rep. Michael Burgess (R-TX) introduced a resolution that would reestablish the program (H.R. 4312); however, the bill has gained little traction.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Report Shows Public Schools Around the Nation Use the Bible](#)

[Report Links Reduced Divorce Rate to Recession](#)

[Catholic Foster-Care Program in D.C. Ends Due to Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage](#)



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